**UNITED NATIONS** **A E**

**General Assembly**
**Economic and Social Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

A/52/155/Add.1
E/1997/68/Add.1
18 June 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-second session
Item 58 of the preliminary list*
RESTRUCTURING AND REVITALIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Substantive session of 1997
Geneva, 30 June-25 July 1997
Item 12 of the provisional agenda**
IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 50/227

# RESTRUCTURING AND REVITALIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS

## Report of the Secretary-General

## Addendum

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. In annex I, paragraph 43, of its resolution 50/227, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a study with a comprehensive assessment of the current arrangements for the sessions of the Economic and Social Council. The present addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 50/227 examines the difference in cost between holding meetings of the Council in New York and Geneva. It should be pointed out that cost comparisons between New York and Geneva depend on the exchange rate at the time the comparison is made.

## II. ASSESSMENT OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR SESSIONS OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

2. The three main costs to be considered are (a) conference-servicing costs, (b) general services costs and (c) the travel costs of substantive and technical servicing staff to attend the session.

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## A. Conference-servicing costs

3. Should the Economic and Social Council decide to change its venue to New York, it is assumed that 80 meetings with services in six languages would be added to the calendar of conferences in New York together with requirements for summary records and in-session documentation, and that the programme in Geneva would be reduced by the same amount.

4. A full-cost analysis applying 1997 rates indicates that costs would be roughly comparable in New York ($1,728,300) and Geneva ($1,690,400) if all the requirements were met from temporary assistance. This estimate covers the cost of services in six languages for 80 meetings with summary records and 120 pages (40 documents) of in-session documentation. The full cost of pre-session and post-session documentation, which is normally processed in New York, is estimated at $2,235,400.

5. The actual cost would depend on whether the change in venue would increase or decrease the total conference-servicing costs at the two conference centres. This would depend on whether additional costs for temporary assistance for meetings would be incurred in New York, and whether permanent capacity allocated for the Council in Geneva under the existing arrangement could be reallocated to other meetings.

6. The total number of meetings programmed in New York and in Geneva exceeds their established capacity, although utilization of permanent capacity may vary at different times of the year and even from week to week. However, even though permanent capacity may be available in New York in July, there is an opportunity cost involved. The number of meetings with interpretation has increased in New York and decreased in Geneva, and experience in 1996 suggests that it is more difficult to accommodate additional meetings in New York than Geneva.

7. The question of venue therefore needs to be viewed in the overall context of the calendar of conferences. Actual costs are minimized if meetings are programmed to make full use of available capacity at all conference centres. As the Economic and Social Council is a principal organ of the United Nations and has significant conference-servicing requirements, it provides a major element around which the calendar of conferences and capacity utilization are planned.

8. At the same time, meeting in Geneva implies some additional costs that would not otherwise be incurred, such as the costs of packing and shipping documents and additional reproduction and distribution costs because documents are required at both locations. It is anticipated that these costs would be reduced, however, or even eliminated with the application of new information technologies.

## B. General services costs

9. The general services costs include those for the services associated with the maintenance of the working environment during the session, namely, mail, telephone, security, information services, and general operating expenses (cleaning, utilities etc.). These costs have been estimated on the basis of

standard parameters and would amount to $103,900 for a session of the Council at Headquarters and $202,200 for a session in Geneva.

C. Travel of substantive and technical servicing staff

10. For meetings held in Geneva, it is estimated that $258,200 would be required to cover the travel and subsistence of 16 technical servicing staff, 30 substantive staff from Headquarters and 15 substantive staff away from Headquarters. For meetings held at Headquarters, it is estimated that $135,300 would be required for the travel and subsistence of 30 substantive staff from offices away from Headquarters.

11. In addition, the cost of travel of representatives of the specialized agencies is also a cost to Member States and should be taken into account. The cost of their travel has been estimated at $90,000 for the Council's session in Geneva and $126,000 for its session at Headquarters.

12. In summary, the cost estimates of the substantive session of the Council are as follows:

| | Headquarters | Geneva |
|---|---|---|
| | (US dollars) | |
| (a) Conference-servicing costs (full cost) | | |
| - Without summary records | 2 912 700 | 2 874 500 |
| - With summary records | 3 963 700 | 3 925 800 |
| (b) General services costs, including shipment | 103 900 | 202 200 |
| (c) Travel costs for substantive and technical staff servicing the meetings | 135 300 | 258 200 |
| (d) Travel costs for representatives of the United Nations system agencies | 126 000 | 90 000 |

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